St Mary Magdalene's Anglican Church Moore Street, Adelaide

An open, welcoming and inclusive community in the heart of the City of Adelaide



Keeping Community Thursday 24 December 2020 Spiritual Resources & Reflections

Dear friends.

The relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions makes it possible to once again worship on Sunday, when Mass is sung at 10 am. The church is also open for private prayer and public worship on Tusday and Thursday from 11.30 am to 1 pm, and Mass is offered at 12.10 pm after the Angelus at 12 noon.

The decision to return to worship in community, even for private prayer, is not a straightforward matter, so we will continue to produce these newsletters for now.

In these Thursday newsletters, we offer ideas and opportunities for nourishing our personal and communal spiritual lives.

1. From Fr Graeme – Praying in Thanks for Jesus Christ

Our prayers at this time of the year can be focussed on the Birth of Christ. How do we go about this?

First we need to assemble our knowledge of Jesus so that we can focus clearly. Jesus was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village and worked in a carpenter's shop until he was about 30. Then he became an itinerant preacher. Jesus never wrote a book nor held any public office. He never set foot inside a major city, nor did he travel far from his birth place. His only credentials were himself. He had nothing with which to cope with the world in any ordinary human sense. He did, however, become popular with many people.

While still young, the tide of popular opinion turned against him and even his close friends deserted him. One of these friends actually denied having any knowledge of Jesus. Another of these friends betrayed him to the authorities who had become Jesus' enemies. His trial was a mockery and he was nailed to a cross together with two thieves. When he was dead, he was taken down from the cross and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a loyal friend.

Many centuries have now passed and this person, Jesus, has become a central figure of the human race. Arguably, no human might has ever affected human life as much as Jesus has – solitary figure though he was.

We do well to pray in thanks for Jesus Christ. This prayer may be helpful:

Holy Father, we thank you for the life of Jesus. We thank you for his teaching and his deeds of love. We thank you for the courage which made him go to the Cross for us all. We thank you for his conquering of death and for bringing eternal life to all who believe in him. We thank you for our membership of the Church on earth, that we may help to make it worthy. Give us the power of the Holy Spirit to show the world whose we are and whom we serve; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

That is just an idea for a prayer. You may well think of other ways of praying your thanks for Jesus this Christmas.

Fr Graeme Kaines Locum Priest

2. Daily Prayer

Most Christian denominations have forms for prayer in the morning and the evening, and at other times of the day. Morning and Evening Prayer in the Anglican church's *A Prayer Book for Australia*, are available in either a fixed form (pages 3-33) or a different form for each day of the week (pages 383-424). The Bible readings for each day can be found in *The Australian Lectionary*, and for reference the readings for the coming week are:

	Morning Prayer	Evening Prayer
Thursday 24 December	Ps 130, 131, 133 Isaiah 28.14-29 Galatians 3.23 – 4.7	Ps 85 Isaiah 33.17-22 Revelation 22.14-21
Friday 25 December Christmas Day	Ps 132.10-18 Micah 4.108 Matthew 1.18 – 2.6	Ps 138 Micah 5.2-5a 1 John 4.7-21
Saturday 26 December St Stephen	Ps 130 Exodus 18.13-26 Acts 6.1-7, 7.1-49	Ps 139 Isaiah 60.1-11 Titus 1
Sunday 27 December The Holy Family	Ps 132 Hebrews 2.5-9	Song of Hannah (APBA p,429) 1 Samuel 1.1-2, 7b-20, 24-28 Luke 2.41-52
Monday 28 December The Holy Innocents	Ps 78.1-30 Genesis 37.13-20 1 Peter 4.12-19	Ps 119.153-176 Isaiah 61 Titus 3
Tuesday 29 December St Thomas Becket	Ps 145 Isaiah 30.15-28 John 1.35-51	Ps 147 Isaiah 62 Ephesians 1.1-14
Wednesday 30 December Josephine Butler	Ps 148, 149 Isaiah 30.29 – 31.9 John 2.1-12	Ps 144, 150 Isaiah 63.1-9 Ephesians 1.15-23
Thursday 31 December John Wycliff	Ps 83.1-18 Isaiah 31 John 2.13-25	Ps 11 Isaiah 65.17-25 Luke 21.25-36

Online Resources

There is a complete online version of Daily Prayer from *A Prayer Book for Australia* for each day available at Australian Daily Prayer https://dailyprayer.ampers.x10.mx/. There is also a free app for mobile devices from the App Store or Google Play. The Church of England provides an online version of its orders for Daily Prayer at https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer. This is also available as a free app (App Store or Google Play).

Times of Prayer

Many people find it helpful to make a particular time daily for prayer and reflection. One option might be to join your prayer with those of the wider world at some special times during the day. While we cannot attend at the church at the present time, you may like to join the wider community in praying the <u>Angelus</u> at 9 am, 12 noon and 6 pm.

3. Reflections and Meditations

Fr Graeme and others within our community will continue to prepare Reflections for Sundays and Holy Days for posting on the web page. Fr Philip Carter's meditations and spiritual reflections are presented on our blog, https://stmarymagdalenesadelaide.org/. To access these meditations, simply go to the blog and select the "Spirit matters" tab on the top.

If you would like to receive an email update when there is a new posting on the blog, whether for a Sunday or weekday service, or for meditations and other supports for prayer, please subscribe to the blog using the box on the right-hand side of the page.

Service booklets as PDF files are still available for Sunday and weekday services, both on the web site and on the Parish's Facebook page.

4. In the Church's Calendar

The Church's calendar in the week after Christmas is rich with commemorations, many of which are of great antiquity. From the earliest days of the church we celebrate St Stephen, a deacon of the early church, and its first martyr; St John the Apostle; and the Holy Innocents. From the middle ages there is St Thomas Becket; the 14th century teacher John Wycliff, and the Victorian social reformer Josephine Butler.

Practically all that we know of **St Stephen** is contained in Chapters 6 and 7 of the Acts of the Apostles. We learn that he was filled with grace and power, and worked great wonders among the people. Certain Jews, all of them influential citizens, debated with Stephen, but proved no match for the wisdom and spirit with which he spoke. They persuaded others to make the charge of blasphemy against him. He was seized and carried before the Sanhedrin.

In his speech, Stephen recalled God's guidance through Israel's history, as well as Israel's idolatry and disobedience. He then claimed that his persecutors were showing this same spirit. "... you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do."

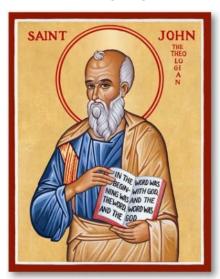


Stephen's speech brought anger from the crowd. "But he, filled with the holy Spirit, looked up intently to heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.' ... They threw him out of the city, and began to stone him ... As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And in forgiveness, he prayed, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them'"

Stephen died as Jesus did: falsely accused, brought to unjust condemnation because he spoke the truth fearlessly. He died with his eyes fixed on God, and with a prayer of forgiveness on his lips. Let us pray that we might die with courage, total trust and forgiving love.

It is God who calls; human beings answer. The vocation of **John the Apostle** and his brother James is stated very simply in the Gospels, along with that of Peter and his brother Andrew: Jesus called them; they followed. Their response was absolute. For the three former fishermen—Peter, James and John—that faith was to be rewarded by a special friendship with Jesus. They alone were privileged to be present at the Transfiguration, the raising of the daughter of Jairus and the agony in Gethsemane.

But John's friendship was even more special: he was "the disciple whom Jesus loved", who reclined next to Jesus at the Last Supper, and to whom Jesus gave the honour of caring for his mother, as John stood beneath the cross. "Woman, behold your son ... Behold, your mother."



St John is traditionally considered the author of the Gospel that bears his name, as well as three New Testament letters and the Book of Revelation. His Gospel is a very personal account. He sees the glorious and divine Jesus already in the incidents of his mortal life. At the Last Supper, John's Jesus speaks as if he were already in heaven. John's is the Gospel of Jesus' glory.

The Holy Innocents. Herod "the Great," king of Judea, was unpopular with his people because of his connections with the Romans and his religious indifference. Hence he was insecure and fearful of any threat to his throne. He was a master politician and a tyrant capable of extreme brutality.

Matthew 2:1-18 tells this story: Herod was "greatly troubled" when the "wise men", scholars from the east, came asking the whereabouts of "the newborn king of the Jews," whose star they had seen. They were told that the Jewish Scriptures named Bethlehem as the place where the Messiah would be born. Herod cunningly told them to report back to him so that he could also "do him homage" when in reality he planned to have him killed. The wise men found Jesus, offered him their gifts, and warned by an angel, avoided Herod on their way home. Jesus escaped to Egypt.



Herod became furious and "ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under." The horror of the massacre and the devastation of the mothers and

fathers led Matthew to quote Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children ...". Rachel was the wife of Jacob (Israel). She is pictured as weeping at the place where the Israelites were herded together by the conquering Assyrians for their march into captivity.

The Holy Innocents are few in comparison to the genocides of our own time. But even if there had been only one, we recognise the greatest treasure God put on the earth—a human person, destined for eternity, and graced by Jesus' death and resurrection.

A strong man who wavered for a moment, but then learned one cannot come to terms with evil, and so became a strong churchman, a martyr, and a saint—that was **Thomas Becket**, archbishop of Canterbury, murdered in his cathedral on December 29, 1170.

While Archdeacon of Canterbury, he was made chancellor of England at the age of 36 by King Henry II, who counted him a friend. When Henry felt it advantageous to make his chancellor the archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas gave him fair warning: he might not accept all of Henry's intrusions into Church affairs. Nevertheless, in 1162 he was made archbishop, resigned his chancellorship, and reformed his whole way of life! Troubles were not slow to begin, for Henry insisted upon usurping Church rights, and Thomas was quick to respond.



Thomas came under intense pressure and fled to France for safety, remain in exile for seven years. When he returned to England he suspected it would mean certain death. Because Thomas refused to remit censures he had placed upon bishops favoured by the king, Henry cried out in a rage, "Will no one rid me of this troublesome priest!" Four knights, taking his words as his wish, slew Thomas in Canterbury Cathedral.

No one becomes a saint without struggle, especially with oneself. Thomas knew he must stand firm in defence of truth and right, even at the cost of his life. We also must take a stand in the face of pressures—against dishonesty, deceit, destruction of life—at the cost of popularity, convenience, promotion, and even greater goods.

Josephine Butler was born in 1828 into a family of wealthy political reformers. Mostly educated at home, she was schooled in social reform and in a form of Christianity that emphasised practical action.

In 1852 she married the academic and Anglican clergyman Dr George Butler, who shared her hatred of social injustice. George's career took them first to Oxford, where Josephine achieved a level of education unusual for a woman of her time.

The Butlers moved to Liverpool in 1864 and it was there that Josephine became increasingly involved in women's rights. She was particularly passionate about higher education and the plight of prostitutes.



In 1869 Josephine was appointed Secretary to the Ladies' National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts. Introduced in the 1860s to reduce venereal disease and regulate prostitution, these laws required all women believed to be prostitutes in seaports and garrison towns to submit to intrusive medical examinations. Their male clients, however, were not subjected to this.

Butler and her fellow campaigners recognised the examinations as unjust and humiliating and she conducted a long and ardent campaign for their repeal, confronting Victorian sexual taboos head-on. The Acts were finally repealed in Britain in 1886.

Butler also turned her attention abroad, visiting France, Italy and Switzerland, and spoke out against the growing problem of under-age prostitution and licensed houses. This led to the founding in London of a committee for the suppression of 'white slave traffic'.

In later years, Josephine lobbied for causes including Irish Home Rule, women's suffrage and the rooting out of police corruption. She also led a campaign to end the regulation of prostitution in India. She died in 1906.

John Wycliff (c.1330-84) was an English theologian, philosopher, church reformer and promoter of the first complete translation of the Bible into English.

Wycliff was already firmly established as a notable theologian and philosopher when in 1374 King Edward III appointed him to discuss with representatives of the Pope the differences between England and Rome, such as papal taxes and appointments to church posts, all of which were already contributing to the unrest that would ultimately lead to the Protestant Reformation. He wrote treatises on divine and civil dominion, and decried the wealth and power of the clergy.



Over time, his attacks on the beliefs and practices of the church became more systematic, and popes, cardinals, and clergy in remunerative secular employment, as well as the monks and friars, were all castigated in language that was bitter even for 14th-century religious controversy.

In later life, Wycliff turned to planning a translation of the Bible into English. For him, the Bible became a necessity in his theories to replace the discredited authority of the church and to make the law of God available to every person who could read.

Most of Wycliffe's post-Reformation, Protestant biographers see him as the first Reformer, fighting almost alone the corruption of his day.

5. The Church Fathers on St Stephen

From a sermon by St. Fulgentius of Ruspe

The armament of love

Yesterday we celebrated the birth in time of our eternal King. Today we celebrate the triumphant suffering of his soldier.

Yesterday our king, clothed in his robe of flesh, left his place in the virgin's womb and graciously visited the world. Today his soldier leaves the tabernacle of his body and goes triumphantly to heaven.

Our king, despite his exalted majesty, came in humility for our sake; yet he did not come empty-handed. He brought his soldiers a great gift that not only enriched them but also made them unconquerable in battle, for it was the gift of love, which was to bring men to share in his divinity. He gave of his bounty, yet without any loss to himself. In a marvellous way he changed into wealth the poverty of his faithful followers while remaining in full possession of his own inexhaustible riches.

And so the love that brought Christ from heaven to earth raised Stephen from earth to heaven; shown first in the king, it later shone forth in his soldier. Love was Stephen's weapon by which he gained every battle, and so won the crown signified by his name. His love of God kept him from yielding to the ferocious mob; his love for his neighbour made him pray for those who were stoning him. Love inspired him to reprove those who erred, to make them amend; love led him to pray for those who stoned him, to save them from punishment. Strengthened by the power of his love, he overcame the raging cruelty of Saul and won his persecutor on earth as his companion in heaven. In his holy and tireless love he longed to gain by prayer those whom he could not convert by admonition.

Now at last, Paul rejoices with Stephen, with Stephen he delights in the glory of Christ, with Stephen he exalts, with Stephen he reigns. Stephen went first, slain by the stones thrown by Paul, but Paul followed after, helped by the prayer of Stephen. This, surely, is the true life, my brothers, a life in which Paul feels no shame because of Stephen's death, and Stephen delights in Paul's companionship, for love fills them both with joy. It was Stephen's love that prevailed over the cruelty of the mob, and it was Paul's love that covered the multitude of his sins; it was love that won for both of them the kingdom of heaven.

Love, indeed, is the source of all good things; it is an impregnable defence,- and the way that leads to heaven. He who walks in love can neither go astray nor be afraid: love guides him, protects him, and brings him to his journey's end.

My brothers, Christ made love the stairway that would enable all Christians to climb to heaven. Hold fast to it, therefore, in all sincerity, give one another practical proof of it, and by your progress in it, make your ascent together.

6. The Church Fathers on St John the Apostle

From tractates on the first letter of John by Saint Augustine, bishop

Life itself was revealed in the flesh

Our message is the Word of life. We announce what existed from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our own eyes, what we have touched with our own hands. Who could touch the Word with his hands unless the Word was made flesh and lived among us?

Now this Word, whose flesh was so real that he could be touched by human hands, began to be flesh in the Virgin Mary's womb; but he did not begin to exist at that moment. We know this from what John says: What existed from the beginning. Notice how John's letter bears witness to his Gospel, which you just heard a moment ago: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.

Someone might interpret the phrase the Word of life to mean a word about Christ, rather than Christ's body itself which was touched by human hands. But consider what comes next: *and life itself was revealed.* Christ therefore is himself the Word of life.

And how was this life revealed? It existed from the beginning, but was not revealed to men, only to angels, who looked upon it and feasted upon it as their own spiritual bread. But what does Scripture say? *Mankind ate the bread of angels*.

Life itself was therefore revealed in the flesh. In this way what was visible to the heart alone could become visible also to the eye, and so heal men's hearts. For the Word is visible to the heart alone, while flesh is visible to bodily eyes as well. We already possessed the means to see the flesh, but we had no means of seeing the Word. The Word was made flesh so that we could see it, to heal the part of us by which we could see the Word.

John continues: And we are witnesses and we proclaim to you that eternal life which was with the Father and has been revealed among us – one might say more simply "revealed to us."

We proclaim to you what we have heard and seen. Make sure that you grasp the meaning of these words. The disciples saw our Lord in the flesh, face to face; they heard the words he spoke, and in turn they proclaimed the message to us. So we also have heard, although we have not seen.

Are we then less favoured than those who both saw and heard? If that were so, why should John add: so that you too may have fellowship with us? They saw, and we have not seen; yet we have fellowship with them, because we and they share the same faith.

And our fellowship is with God the Father and Jesus Christ his Son. And we write this to you to make your joy complete – complete in that fellowship, in that love and in that unity.

7. The Church Fathers on the Holy Innocents

From a sermon by St. Quodvultdeus

They cannot speak, yet they bear witness to Christ

A tiny child is born, who is a great king. Wise men are led to him from afar. They come to adore one who lies in a manger and yet reigns in heaven and on earth. When they tell of one who is born a king, Herod is disturbed. To save his kingdom he resolves to kill him, though if he would have faith in the child, he himself would reign in peace in this life and for ever in the life to come.

Why are you afraid, Herod, when you hear of the birth of a king? He does not come to drive you out, but to conquer the devil. But because you do not understand this you are disturbed and in a rage, and to destroy one child whom you seek, you show your cruelty in the death of so many children.

You are not restrained by the love of weeping mothers or fathers mourning the deaths of their sons, nor by the cries and sobs of the children. You destroy those who are tiny in body because fear is destroying your heart. You imagine that if you accomplish your desire you can prolong your own life, though you are seeking to kill Life himself.

Yet your throne is threatened by the source of grace, so small, yet so great, who is lying in the manger. He is using you, all unaware of it, to work out his own purposes freeing souls from captivity to the devil. He has taken up the sons of the enemy into the ranks of God's adopted children.

The children die for Christ, though they do not know it. The parents mourn for the death of martyrs. The child makes of those as yet unable to speak fit witnesses to himself. See the kind of kingdom that is his, coming as he did in order to be this kind of king. See how the deliverer is already working deliverance, the saviour already working salvation.

But you, Herod, do not know this and are disturbed and furious. While you vent your fury against the child, you are already paying him homage, and do not know it.

How great a gift of grace is here! To what merits of their own do the children owe this kind of victory? They cannot speak, yet they bear witness to Christ. They cannot use their limbs to engage in battle, yet already they bear off the palm of victory.

8. St Thomas Becket writes to King Henry II

"To his most revered lord, Henry, by the grace of God, the illustrious king of the English, duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, and earl of Anjou, Thomas, by the same grace the humble servant of the church of Canterbury, health and best prayers for his prosperity in all things.

To speak concerning God stands in need of a mind utterly free and unbiased; upon this subject it is that I address my lord, and, I trust, with peace towards all men. I beseech you, my lord, that, with patience of mind, you will endure some little advice, which, by the grace of God, which is never ineffectual, will contribute to the salvation of your soul and to my acquittal.

Difficulties beset me on every side; even tribulation and difficulties have come upon me, who am placed between two most grave and fearful alternatives. When I say between two most fearful alternatives, I mean a dangerous silence on the one hand, and admonition of you on the other. If, on the one hand, I am silent, it will be death to me, and I shall not escape the hands of the Lord, who says, 'If thou cost not warn the wicked from his wicked way, and he shall die in his iniquity, his blood He will require at your hands.' If, on the other hand, I admonish you I fear, which God forbid, that I shall not escape the wrath of my lord. And I trust that it may not befall me, according to what the wise man says, that when a person sends to intercede or to admonish a person who is not pleased thereat, it is to be feared lest, becoming angered, his mind may be provoked to do what is worse.

What, then, am I to do? Am I to speak, or am I to be silent? In either alternative there is danger, no doubt. But inasmuch as it is safer to fall under the indignation of men than into the hands of the living God, trusting in the mercy of the Most High, in whose hands are the hearts of kings, and who will induce them as He shall think fit (and I trust that He will, to take the better part), I will speak to my lord, inasmuch as I have once begun so to do. For often are good things provided for those who are unwilling, and especially when the safety more than the will is consulted.

In your land is kept in captivity the daughter of Sion, the spouse of a great king, oppressed by many, insulted by those who long have hated her, and by whom she ought rather to be honoured than addicted, and in especial by you. Keeping, therefore, in your recollection each of those blessings which God has bestowed upon you in the beginning of your reign, in the middle thereof, and almost unto the present moment, do you release her, and allow her to reign jointly with her husband, to the end that God may bless you, and that your kingdom may forthwith begin to recover its strength, and this reproach be taken away from your generation, and that unbroken peace may reign in your days.

Believe me, most serene prince, my much loved lord, the Almighty is slow in retribution, long-suffering in His patience, but most severe in His vengeance. Hear me, and do that which is

right. But, if otherwise, it is greatly to be feared that (and I trust that so it may not be) He will gird His sword upon His thigh, and will come in His might and with a strong hand, armed with many woes, to set free His spouse, and that not without heavy oppressions and servitude, attended by tribulation. But if you listen to me, then the Lord will of necessity be sensible forthwith of your duteousness as acting the part of a valiant soldier on His side, and in such case He will bless you, and will add glory unto your glory, even unto the issue of your sons and of your daughters, down to distant times.

But if otherwise, I fear, and may God avert it from you, that the sword will not depart from your house, until the Most High shall have come and avenged the injuries done to Him and His; just as it did not depart from the house of Solomon, although God had made choice of him, and had conferred upon him such great wisdom, and such an enjoyment of peacefulness, that it was said by all, 'This is the son of wisdom and of peace;' yet, inasmuch as he departed from the path of the Lord, and proceeded from wickedness to wickedness, God divided asunder his kingdom, and gave it unto his servant; and, in especial, because, after the commission of his sin, he did not instantly seek to appease the Lord, as his father David had done, who immediately after his offence humbled himself before the Lord, corrected his fault, sought for mercy, and obtained pardon; and would that, with the grace of God, you would do the like.

These words I write unto you at present, the rest I have placed in the mouth of him who bears these presents, a pious man, one of great credit, and, as I believe, a faithful servant of yours. In them, I pray that so it may please you to place full belief; still in preference, with your favour, I could wish to enjoy the condescension of an interview with you.

Once and always to my lord, farewell!"

9. Intentions for Your Daily Prayers

We continue to pray throughout the week for the world and the church. These intentions may be helpful in your private or family prayers.

For the world. The leaders of the world as they seek to respond to the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. For medical researchers, that they may be granted knowledge and wisdom as they search for a vaccine and cure. For refugees and asylum seekers, that they may find places of safety and welcome.

For the church. For all those who are challenged to be church in a different and unfamiliar way. In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, pray for the Dioceses of Ezo (South Sudan); Faisalabad (Pakistan); and the Falkland Islands. in our national church, pray for the Diocese of The Murray; and within the Diocese of Adelaide, for the school community at Investigator College.

For our local community. For the Collective as it resumes its ministry to the community in the Drop-In Centre is suspended, and for its guests as they seek places to eat and rest. For the Magdalene Centre, as it deals with the need to change the way it delivers services in order to safeguard the health of customers, staff and volunteers.

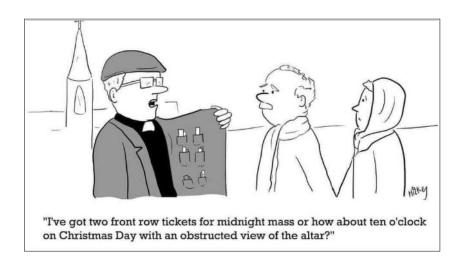
For those in need. For all those who are sick in body, mind or spirit. For all those affected by the COVID-19 coronavirus and all who care for them. For those who are commended to our prayers, especially Paull, Valerie, David, Sim, Chris, Clarice, Philip, Phyllis, Dulcie, Jasmin and Henry.

For those who have died. For those who have worked and worshipped in this place before us; all those who have died recently; those who have died as a result of COVID-19; and those

whose anniversaries of death occur at about this time;.

Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them.

For the saints. For the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Joseph, St Mary Magdalene, St Thomas, and holy women and men of every time and place.





This newsletter will normally be distributed weekly on Thursday. Any appropriate items should be emailed to the Parish Office, omarymag@anglicaresa.com.au, by Tuesday evening at 5 pm.

